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MONTANA STATE HISTORICAL RECORDS ADVISORY BOARD

The Montana Archivist

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3

SPRING 2000

SHRAB Grants Awarded

The Montana State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) is pleased to announce the recipients of the grants to help local historical records repositories in Montana.

The lucky recipients are:

- $ Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives (Butte)
- $ Cascade County Historical Society (Great Falls)
- $ City of Wolf Point, City Clerk (Wolf Point)
- $ Diocese of Great Falls-Billings (Great Falls)
- $ Heritage Museum (Libby)
- $ Meagher County Historical Association/Bair Family Museum (White Sulphur Springs) [a joint application]
- $ Museum of Women's History (Billings)
- $ Tobacco Valley Historical Village (Eureka)
- $ Treasure County '89ers Museum (Hysham).

The Montana SHRAB received money for the project from the Montana Cultural Trust and from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. Each repository will receive cash regrants ranging up to $5,000, plus the time and expertise of a full-time archivist/records analyst, who will spend up to one month on-site at each repository.

Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives. $5,000 to microfilm and make available to the public 1,000 volumes and over 150,000 primary source images. Ellen Crain is the project director

Cascade County Historical Society. $5,000 to improve storage conditions, making the collections electronically accessible, and entering the catalog information in MARC format. Judy Ellinghausen is the project director.

City of Wolf Point, City Clerk. $5,000 to make city records more accessible to the general public and allow easy retrieval of the information through the use of imaging technology. Also, to develop model imaging policies and procedures for other local governments to use. Marlene R. Mahlum, City Clerk/Treasurer, is the project director.

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings. $879.45 to assess suitability of the current archives location; develop a schedule for parish records and accession newly-acquired records; and project requirements for expanding the archives. Sister Pat Cormack and Marge Spragg are the project directors.

Heritage Museum. $5,000 to develop a community archives and provide adequate shelving and storage materials. Jeff Gruber is the project director.

Meagher County Historical Association/Bair Family Museum. $5,000 to work together to process and catalog county, family, and ranch records at the two repositories. Lee Rostad and Donna Dupea are the project directors.

Museum of Women's History. $1,069.25 to put into place a collections management system to appraise, describe, catalog, and preserve records in the museum's collections. Lana Cummins is the project director.

Tobacco Valley Historical Village. $1,318.25 to develop policies; assess and accession collections; arrange and catalog collections; and sponsor a one-day conservation/preservation workshop. Cathryn Schroeder is the project director.

Treasure County '89ers Museum. $3,600 to appraise, accession, arrange, describe and catalog, and properly store the museum's archival collections. Pat Miller is the project director.

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HOW TO BASICS — Brief Review of Shelving Options

The selection of storage furniture—e.g., shelving, map cases, oral history cabinets—for library and archival materials requires careful investigation. Many of the currently available choices contain materials that produce by-products that contribute to the deterioration of the collections they house. In addition, some construction features are damaging and also contribute to deterioration of collections.

Baked Enamel

Until recently only baked enamel shelving was recommended. Constructed of steel with a baked enamel coating, this shelving was thought to be made of chemically-stable materials. Questions have been raised, however, about the possibility that the baked enamel coating may give off formaldehyde and other volatiles harmful to collections if it has not been baked long enough at high enough temperatures. This concern is especially serious when collections are stored in an enclosed area or with poor air circulation, or are stored in closed furniture such as map cases and file cabinets.

Baked enamel furniture is no longer widely recommended unless it has been *properly* baked. Testing should comply with ASTM (American Society of Testing Materials) E-595. Furniture can be less conclusively tested in-house with the organic solvent methyl ethyl ketone (MEK). If this crude test, known as the MEK rub test, indicates that the coating may not be properly baked, the furniture should perhaps be tested by a professional testing service.

Steel storage furniture and shelving with various powder coatings appear to avoid the off-gassing problems associated with baked enamel. Powder coatings are fused onto the steel. The MEK rub test should be performed in an inconspicuous area where the steel is the heaviest gauge to confirm that the coating is properly cured.

Anodized Aluminum

Anodized aluminum is another option. This uncoated metal is extremely strong yet light in weight. The metal itself is reported to be non-reactive and, since it has no coating, off-gassing problems are eliminated. Anodized aluminum is considered by many to be the best choice, but it tends to be the most expensive.

Wood

Shelving made of wood has traditionally been popular. Harmful acids and other substances, however, are emitted by wood, wood composites, and some sealants and adhesives. In most cases volatiles are present for the life of the materials. To avoid potential damage to collections, the use of storage furniture and shelving made of wood or wood products should be avoided.

Certain woods and wood composites are more potentially damaging than others. Oak, which has been used extensively in libraries, is considered the wood with the most volatile acidity and should not be used. Many wood composites that are advertised as formaldehyde-free may contain potentially damaging acids or other aldehydes.

Coatings for Wood

For wooden storage furniture and shelves that are already in use, safeguards should be taken. All wood should be sealed. No coating or sealant will completely block the emission of acids and harmful volatiles for prolonged periods of time, but it can be useful for short-term exposure. Some sealants are better than others at blocking damaging substances.

The most readily available sealant that is recommended at this time is a moisture-borne polyurethane. Oil-modified polyurethanes, oil-based paints, and other products that contain oil or alkyd resins should be avoided.

From "NEDCC Technical Leaflet, Section 4, Leaflet 2," which can be found in *Preservation of Library & Archival Materials: A Manual,* Third Edition, Revised and Expanded, Edited by Sherelyn Ogden, Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC), 1999. For a copy of the complete technical leaflet, write to NEDCC at 100 Brickstone Square Andover, MA 01810-1494, call them at 1-978-470-1010, <http://www.nedcc.org>.

News from Around Montana

Big Horn County Historical Society (Hardin)

"Good Ole Days" Exhibit. This summer Hardin will be hosting an All-School Reunion, June 31 through July 2. One of the things the Historical Society will be doing is digging out those old annuals, scrapbooks, and other items that allow us to reflect on those "Good Ole High School Days!"

Several of the new summer exhibits at the Big Horn County Historical Museum will allow you to take a journey down memory lane. In the main building we will take you back in time through photographs and memorabilia of early-day Hardin. You can take time to reflect on the community as it was during your youth. Then take a short walk out to the restored Halfway Schoolhouse where you will find a special summer exhibit featuring school pictures, school newspapers, dance cards, and other great items pertaining to those good old school dazes! We also will be offering an opportunity to view our collection of high school annuals.

Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives (Butte)

Territorial Petition Saved. Thanks to some quick action on the part of Archives Director Ellen Crain, an important document that was about to be sold out of state is coming home to the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives. The document—an 1875 Montana Territory petition that established Butte as a town site—contains signatures of prominent Butte citizens of the time. The Archives has a copy of the petition, but the original was filed in Deer Lodge and lost.

The petition was originally advertised on eBay (an internet auction house) and received several bids. But when the Archives expressed their interest, the owner pulled it from auction and accepted a combination purchase and donation. The owner praised Crain for "going beyond the call of duty." He told a Lee Montana Newspapers reporter that "she saw this for what it was and really pursued it for the city."

Miracle of America Museum (Polson)

Banking Memorabilia. Thanks to Frank and Lulu Stock, memorabilia from the Security State Bank in Polson was preserved. Frank spent several nights and weekends sorting through boxes and file cabinets in the bank cellar and old vault to make sure that no items of value would be destroyed, while at the same time ensuring that no one's privacy (names on paperwork) would be endangered. Dating back to 1910 are nice plat maps, ledger books, WWII bond posters, a copy of FDR's 1933 executive order taking America off the Gold Standard, bank advertising material, and many other odd and interesting items and artifacts relating to banking. All this will be on display in a recreated bank on the back side of the Montana Fiddlers' Hall of Fame.

Montana Historical Society Archives (Helena)

Wellington Rankin Papers Now Processed and Available for Use. After years of languishing in the Archives' sub-basement due to confidentiality restrictions, the Wellington Rankin Papers are now processed and available for easy access. Wellington D. Rankin was born in Missoula, Montana, in 1884. His oldest sister Jeannette was the first woman elected to the United States Congress.

Rankin began the practice of law in Helena in 1909, specializing in industrial accident cases, representing many workers injured in mines and on the railroads. Rankin first became involved in politics in 1914 when he ran unsuccessfully for the legislature as a Progressive. Two years later he was campaign manager for his sister Jeannette in her campaign for the U. S. Congress. Wellington Rankin served as Montana attorney general, 1921-1924, and briefly as a Montana Supreme Court justice in 1924. After an unsuccessful run for governor in 1928, he was appointed U.S. district attorney and was re-appointed in 1930. In addition to his law practice and political campaigns, Rankin also was involved in numerous business ventures, including the Miller Brothers Ranch and the 71 Ranch.

His papers cover all the various aspects of his career including his law practice, his ranches, his political campaigns, and his personal life. Among the highlights in the collection are personal letters from Jeannette and a rare letter from actor Gary Cooper crediting Rankin with inspiring him to begin an acting career.

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c/o Montana Historical Society
P.O. Box 201201
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News from Around Montana *(cont.)*

Western Heritage Center (Billings)

1999 Accessions. The Western Heritage Center Archives and Collections received 62 collections of archival materials, photographs, and artifacts in 1999. Included in the archival donations was a collection of architectural drawings and photographs from the well-known architectural firm of J.G. Link and Company. Their designs included two wings of the state capitol building in Helena, the Greyhound Bus Depot in Billings, the Pine Hills School in Miles city, and various county courthouses in the four-state area. While the bulk of the materials will be kept at WHC, some of the pieces were placed in the MSU—Bozeman Special Collections, where many of the original drawings are housed, and others will be housed in the archives of the Miles City Preservation Commission. The collection was donated by Jim Wertman of CTA Architects of Billings.

New Archives Hours. In an effort to better serve our community, our archives will now be fully staffed on Tuesdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Researchers are welcome to visit—free of charge—but must make an appointment ahead of time. For more information, contact Kevin Kooistra-Manning at 406-256-6809, ext. 27.

"Snap Shots and Long Shots" Exhibit. The grand opening for this exhibit was February 1. The exhibit shows the visions of community team leaders who looked to the past and into the future for this participatory exhibit. The exhibit features time capsule displays, vintage film footage, interviews between grandparents and grandchildren, a headlines and highlights project, and interactive materials for museum visitors.

Stumptown Historical Society (Whitefish)

Copy Negative Project. A project that Frank Gregg began—and worked very hard on this winter—has been the copying of all photographs for which no negatives existed. Numbering, filing, and cataloging on the computer of these photographs is underway.

New Photograph Display. An effort to professionalize the museum has been authorized by the board of directors. Improving the presentation of photographs and similar displays is the primary focus. This project will be interesting to anyone who enjoys looking at the old photographs!